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PRESS CLIPPINGS

Office of Program Resources Management

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Sunday, August 7, 2005

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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #11

(Increased Access to Quality Education and Livelihood Skills in Selected Areas, Particularly Those Most Affected by Poverty and Conflict)

Out-of-school youths in conflict-affected areas receive training

(MindaNews Online, 8/07/05)

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The Mindanao Business Council (MBC) is working with the Save the Children Foundation, an American non-government organization to develop “willing to learn” out-of-school-youth in conflict-affected areas through skills development training.

Funded by the United States Assistance for International Development (USAID) through the Save the Children Foundation, the MBC is focusing on the skills development training of out-of-school youths and facilitating industry immersion of the trainees.

The MBC has so far identified four pilot areas in Mindanao for the project dubbed assistance for Comprehensive Educational Development of Mindanao Project (ASCEND-Mindanao).

The pilot areas are Midsayap, North Cotabato; Datu Piang, Maguindanao; Dinas, Zamboanga del Sur; and Talipao, Sulu.

ASCEND-Mindanao Project team leader Corazon Baylon said the MBC tapped the chambers of commerce and industry in the four areas in facilitating the Skills Training Industry Immersion trainees.

So far, Baylon said in an orientation Saturday night with local chamber members, they have already graduated 200 trainees in banana and seaweed propagation, cellular phone repairs, cooking and food processing.

Small engine repair training is still going on and involves 50 trainees in Midsayap, while another batch of 50 will start training on baking next week in Talipao.

“It (training) is based on the needs of the areas and market available,” Baylon explained.

“It is being implemented in the conflict-affected areas as it in line with the government’s peace and development framework of Mindanao,” she added.

She said the MBC through the chambers of commerce committed to employ the graduates after providing them technical assistance.

The MBC will provide the market for youths who engage in banana and seaweed planting, she said.

ASCEND-Mindanao started in October last year and aims to graduate 400 out-of-school-youths by September this year and complete the target goal of 800 OSY next year.

The USAID released P14 million for the project implementation with P28 million counterpart in cash and in kind from the MBC and the chambers of commerce.
(Bong Garcia, Jr./MindaNews)